



News Release

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Whooping cough case count passes 1,000 cases in WA — epidemic continues

Surpasses total for all of 2011 before the end of April

OLYMPIA — Washington's whooping cough epidemic continues on a record pace that has already surpassed 1,000 reported cases. The total of 1,008 as of April 21 is more than reported in all of 2011 and is the highest number of cases since 1,026 were reported in all of 2005.

Our state is on pace to reach more than 3,000 cases for the year; levels that haven't been seen in more than six decades.

"We're very concerned about the risk to infants, especially because of how quickly whooping cough is spreading," says Secretary of Health, Mary Selecky. "Whooping cough can be life threatening for infants, and they're too young to get enough doses of vaccine to be protected. That's why we want everyone else to make sure they're vaccinated against whooping cough."

Already this year 71 infants under a year old have been reported to have whooping cough. Eighteen of them have been hospitalized. No babies have died in 2012, but two babies died in 2010 and two in 2011.

Many cases are being reported in school age children. The vaccine that young children get wears off over time, so all children age 11-12 should get a whooping cough booster shot, called Tdap.

The Tdap vaccine is also recommended for pregnant women and women who recently gave birth. Getting vaccinated before giving birth helps prevent the mother from spreading the illness to her newborn. A new Department of Health whooping cough public service announcement featuring a Snohomish mom whose 27 day old baby last year died highlights the need to vaccinate.

“This is what we’re trying to prevent,” says Dr. Maxine Hayes, State Health Officer. “When adults get sick with whooping cough it can be miserable, but when babies get the disease, they often must be hospitalized because it’s difficult for them to feed, sleep, and breathe.”

Selecty and Hayes urge all teens and adults to check their immunization status. Many health care providers use the state’s immunization registry and can check which vaccines have been given. Most health insurance carriers cover the whooping cough vaccine; adults should double check with their health plan. Whooping cough vaccines are available to all Washington children under 19 years old through health care provider offices participating in the state’s Childhood Vaccine Program.

More information on whooping cough disease and who should be vaccinated is [available on our website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov). The number of reported cases is updated every Tuesday afternoon.

The [Department of Health website](#) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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